Skepticism and the Counter-Reformation in France

by Richard H. Popkin

This exploration into the Counter-Reformation in France will attempt to trace and explain one of the oddest developments of this period–the alliance of the most orthodox Catholics with the most skeptical followers of Montaigne in a common crusade against Calvinism. Some recent studies in the history of French theology after the Council of Trent point out that the prevailing currents of Catholic theory were primarily negative and Augustinian, and were more against scholasticism, rationalism, and Calvinism than for any systematic and coherent intellectual defense of the faith.[1] What I shall examine is an important side of this chapter in intellectual history that has been rather neglected, the relationship between the revival of the Greek skeptical theory, Pyrrhonism, and the strategy and theory of Counter-Reformation among many of the dynamic leaders of the time. Although this paper will be largely narrative in character, I shall also attempt to develop an explanation for the strange tale that is to be told.

The picture that has usually been painted of the French skeptics from Montaigne to his heirs and disciples like Mlle. de Gournay and François de La Mothe Le Vayer is that of a group of essentially irreligious and anti-religious figures carrying on a campaign of *libertinism* in thought, leading to an era of *libertinism* in moral behavior. The leaders of the French Counter-Reformation, on the other hand, like St. François de Sales and the Cardinal du Perron, have been portrayed as dynamic and inspiring religious figures, opposing the unbelief of their age in order to make France again "toute Catholique."

Re-evaluations have been made recently of this traditional alignment of figures, by discovering a religious side of Montaigne, and occasionally, though only occasionally, of some of his French disciples. Books have been written on "the religious soul of Montaigne," and people have proclaimed, "Montaigne not a Christian! Who can believe that this has ever been said?" This movement in reconstructing the official portrait of Montaigne has gone so far that it is often claimed that the skepticism of Montaigne is an invention of Pascal, and is a complete distortion of the real man.[2]

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1. Cf. Henri Busson: *La pensée religieuse française de Charron à Pascal* (Paris 1933), esp. chaps. IV and V; Henri Gouhier: "La crise de la Théologie au temps de Descartes," *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie,* 3e Ser., IV (1954), pp. 19–54; and the review of Gouhier's article by Julien-Eymard Chesneau in *Dix-Septième Siècle,* no. 28, Juillet 1955, pp. 295–297.

2. On the religious interpretation of Montaigne, see, especially, the Abbé Maturin

One of the crucial facts on which this new interpretation of Montaigne is based is the discovery that he associated with, was friendly with, and agreed with, some of the dominant figures of the French Counter-Reformation, especially the great Spanish Jesuit theologian, Juan Maldonat.[3] But in this "acquital-by-association," perhaps a more revealing hypothesis has been ignored, namely that it is not Montaigne who has to be re-evaluated, but rather the Catholic leaders of the day. This suggestion becomes more plausible when further facts are considered, indicating that not only was Montaigne associated with various French counter-reformers, but so also were all his heirs and disciples, most of whom have never been considered as suitable figures for religious portraits. The dominant and dominating group of French Catholic theologians appear to have been intimately connected with the Montaigne tradition, so that the period of the French Counter-Reformation encompasses such a potpourri of figures as Montaigne's adopted son, the arch skeptic, Father Charron, the Cardinal du Perron who was instrumental in the conversion of Henri IV, the heroic St. François de Sales, and his Pyrrhonian secretary, Bishop Jean-Pierre Camus, and Gentian Hervet, the translator of Sextus Empiricus as well as secretary of the Cardinal of Lorraine; also the great Jesuit disputants, Fathers Gontery and Veron, and Montaigne's adopted daughter, Mlle. de Gournay, and lastly his latter day followers–friends and protegées of Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin–like La Mothe Le Vayer and Gabriel Naudé. As we shall see, the group of skeptics and Catholic leaders had an *entente cordiale* both of theory and of Counter-Reformation, though probably not of belief.

The burden of this study will be to explore the intellectual basis of this alliance, and to show that the character of the argument against Calvinism offered by the French counter-reformers indicates the reason for the association of skeptics and Catholic theologians. In terms of the type of anti-Calvinism developed in France, the skeptics may well have been the theoreticians, or have functioned as the theoreticians, of the theological world in France after the Council of Trent. We shall trace both, the history of one side of the French Counter-Reformation, and the rise of the French skeptics to intellectual leadership in the early seventeenth century, as a joint phenomenon. And then, after this strange alliance had led to

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Dréano: *La pensée religieuse de Montaigne* (Paris 1936); and Clément Sclafert: *L'âme religieuse de Montaigne* (Paris 1951); as well as Camille Aymonier: "Un ami de Montaigne, le Jésuite Maldonat", *Revue Historique de Bordeaux et du Département de la Gironde*, XXVIII (1935), pp. 5–25.

3. Cf. Aymonier: "Un ami de Montaigne, le Jésuite Maldonat"; and Sclafert: "Montaigne et Maldonat", *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclesiastique*, LII (1951), pp. 65–93 and 129–46.

a successful crusade against Calvinism, we shall see that the internal opposition between the Catholics and the skeptics became apparent, and the alliance gradually dissolved. To understand this union of skeptics and church leaders, it is first necessary to examine the means by which the Catholics tried to subdue the Calvinists intellectually, and then to study the rationale for this method, and compare it with the "theological skepticism" being developed by the Montaignians.

In France in the mid-sixteenth century, Calvinism grew very rapidly. In a few short years the country was embroiled in a civil war, both militarily and intellectually. The success of the Calvinists on the latter front required drastic measures to prevent the capture of the citadels of French thought by the reformers. Two remarkable events took place in the 1560's to secure the Catholic intellectual position. One was the publication in Latin of the writings of the Greek skeptic, Sextus Empiricus, and the other the installation in Paris of one of the greatest Jesuit controversialists, Juan Maldonat. As a result of these events "a new machine of war" was fashioned to destroy Calvinism on the intellectual battlefield.

The publication of the writings of a Greek skeptic of the 3rd century A. D. in 1569 may seem to have little to do with Counter-Reformation action. But lest anyone should suspect this, the translator and editor made sure in his preface that the connection would be clear. Gentian Hervet, a prominent French Catholic leader, a veteran of the Council of Trent, the secretary to the Cardinal of Lorraine, and a voluminous pamphleteer against the vices and villainies of Calvinism, told in his preface (written to his employer, the Cardinal of Lorraine), dated March 16, 1567, how he came across the writings of Sextus by accident in the Cardinal's library. Worn out by his translations of the commentaries of the church fathers on Scripture, and by his polemical writing, he was looking for a diversion to read on a trip. And, lo and behold, he found a manuscript of this skeptical treasury which he read with "unbelievable delight." This source book of Greek Pyrrhonism showed him that no act, no human science could resist the onslaught of the arguments that can be proposed against it. The sole thing that is certain is God's revelation to us. All the moderns who try to measure matters beyond them by their reason can be overthrown. And this group includes the modern pagans (referred to as the New Academicians, probably the Italian naturalists), and the Calvinists, who, presumably, are trying to theorize about God, who can only be believed in, not understood. All human theories can be destroyed by skepticism. By so doing, we are taught humility, and are able to restore balance in the mind from the excesses of dogmatism and prepare ourselves to yield to the doctrine of Christ.[4]

4. Preface of Gentian Hervet to Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* (Paris and Antwerp 1569).

Thus the learned Hervet conceived of Calvinism as one more form of human dogmatism and arrogance, attempting to comprehend God in terms of man's petty reason. Complete skepticism, then, which will humble all human rational pretensions, should humble the Calvinists. Therefore skepticism is the weapon of Counter-Reformation, and the publication of Sextus Empiricus will aid in the defense of Catholicism by demolishing the enemy. The true religion ought to be based on faith, and not upon arguments open to the attacks of ancient Pyrrhonism.

A contemporary of Hervet, the Jesuit theologian, Maldonat, developed a dialectical method for answering Calvinism, which when combined with arguments from Greek skepticism, would form the new means for fighting Protestantism. Maldonat was sent to Paris in the early 1560's to the newly established Jesuit Collège de Clermont for the purpose of stemming the tide of reform among the intellectuals. Although he received the highest possible praise from his contemporaries like the Cardinal du Perron (who considered him the greatest Scriptural commentator of modern times), Maldonat seems to have been both, an extremely clever debater and a rather individualistic thinker, whose singular views finally led to a heresy trial.

His arrival in Paris around 1563 caused a great stir. There were fights to obtain seats at his lectures, and intrigues to obtain copies of his lectures. His success brought extreme opposition from both, the Calvinists and the entrenched Catholic theologians of the Sorbonne, who attacked his Augustinian Catholicism, and his readings of Scripture (especially his denial of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, for which he was tried for heresy, and finally acquitted).[5]

Maldonat's theory was, apparently, a combination of doubts about the ability of human reason to settle theological and religious questions, and an insistence that Calvinism, if taken seriously, would produce such doubts about the revelation as to undermine the Christian faith. In his course, we are told that he would first prove the existence of God and then present all the arguments against God's existence. In his writings, there are appeals to base religion on belief, rather than rational understanding, as the means of securing a genuine foundation for Christianity.[6]

Against the Calvinists, Maldonat's thesis is that these new views lead to doubts

5. For information on Maldonat's career, see John Maldonatus: *A Commentary on the Holy Gospel*, trans. by George J. Davie (London 1888), Vol. I, pp. v-vi; Aymonier: "Un Ami de Montaigne, le Jésuite Maldonat," pp. 6–8; and Sclafert: "Montaigne et Maldonat," pp. 70 ff.

6. Cf. Pierre Bayle: *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, art, "Maldonat," Rem. L; Aymonier: "Un ami de Montaigne, le Jésuite Maldonat," pp. 17–18; Sclafert: "Montaigne et Maldonat," pp. 78–91; and Maldonat: *A Commentary on the Holy Gospels*, Vol. II, p. 109.

about Christianity, which, if pursued, will culminate in no belief at all, i. e., in atheism. He attacked the Calvinists on their own ground, the literal reading of Scripture. In his great commentary on the *Gospel according to Matthew,* he tried to show that (a) the Reformers were not consistent in that their reading of the crucial passages in dispute was not literal, and (b) that if they insisted on accepting only the literal content of Scripture they would be forced to deny all the central points of the Christian religion.[7]

This attempt to defeat the Calvinists on their own grounds, when combined with the skeptical barrage of Hervet, became the "new machine of war" of the counter-reformers. It was intended to force the reformers to see that in rejecting the Church's authority, they would be led to doubt everything, and would find themselves in a "forlorn skepticism." This new and potent weapon was fashioned in the Jesuit colleges in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially at the Collège de Clermont and at Bordeaux. One finds it in use, in whole or part, in various writers trained at or teaching in these institutions, like St. François de Sales, Cardinal Bellarmine, Cardinal du Perron, and Fathers Gontery and Veron. The burden of the attack is to show that the views of the reformers lead to several of the classical Greek skeptical puzzles, to insoluble difficulties, and that the reformers' faith is a dubious one for which no sure foundation can be offered.

The argument of the "new machine of war" begins by raising the traditional skeptical problem of the criterion, how do we tell what is the Rule of Faith, the standard by which we tell true faith from false faith? Luther and Calvin had challenged the Church's standard of appeal to the apostolic tradition, written and unwritten, to the writings of the fathers, the decisions of popes and councils. But, then how do we tell that Luther and Calvin are right? They are offering only their own opinions. They insist that the Church can and does err in matters of faith, and hence that the criterion of the Catholics is unsafe and untrustworthy. But, as St. François de Sales observed in his *Controverses* of 1595:

"If therefore the Church can err, O Calvin, O Luther, to what will I have recourse in my difficulties? To Scripture, they say: But what can I do, poor man? For it is concerning Scripture itself that I have difficulties. I am not in doubt if I ought to adjust faith to Scripture or not, for who does not know that it is the word of truth? What troubles me is the understanding of this Scripture."[8]

And who will decide what Scripture says? Here a dispute exists, and a dispute

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7. Maldonat, *op. cit.,* Vol. I, p. 21, and Vol. II, pp. 8–9, 109–110, 398–400, 411, 413, and 416–417.

8. St. François de Sales: *Les Controverses, in Œuvres de Saint François de Sales* Vol. I (Annecy 1892), p. 73.

not just between Catholics and reformers, but between Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin as well. If the Church errs, why turn to one person rather than another in order to find a standard of truth? So, to quote St. François de Sales again:

"But the absurdity of absurdities, and the most unreasonable thing of all, is that, while maintaining that the whole Church has erred for a thousand years in the understanding of the Word of God, Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin are able to feel assured of understanding it correctly; even more, that a simple parson, preaching as the Word of God that the entire visible Church has erred, that Calvin as well as all mankind can err, then dares to pick and choose among the interpretations of Scripture those that please him, and maintains this as the Word of God. Still more, that you others who are told that everyone, including the entire Church, can err in the facts of religion, then are able to believe so stubbornly a minister who preaches to you that you are not willing to hear anything else, nor are willing to examine the claims to true understanding of the Word of God made by the thousand other sects. If everyone can err in the understanding of Scripture, why can't you and your minister? I marvel that you are not always trembling and shaking; I marvel that you are able to live with so much assurance in the doctrines you accept, as if you could not be completely mistaken, and yet, nevertheless, you maintain it is certain that everyone has erred and can err."[9]

The initial use of "the new machine of war" was to show that once one had admitted that the Church can err, and thereby denied the long traditional criterion of faith, a skeptical bombardment of such intensity, patterned on Sextus Empiricus's arguments about the criterion, would be possible, that it would utterly rout the Calvinists and reduce them to the extremes of skeptical despair. The Calvinist reformers denied the infallibility of the Church and offered, as their standard of faith, Scripture. The initial counter-attack was either to haggle, as Maldonat did, about the proper reading of Scripture, and to deny the Calvinist renditions; or to show, as St. François de Sales, Cardinal du Perron, Pierre Charron, and others did, that we cannot tell by Scripture alone what it says or means, and that all that the reformers have to offer are the dubious opinions of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli as to what the book says. (Theodore Beza, Calvin's "bulldog," complained that the Romans think of Scripture "[as though it were some darke thing] it should neede light, fetcht elsewhere then from it selfe.")[10]

The next stage, the perfection of the "new machine of war" was to make the

9. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

10. Theodore Beza: *A Discourse, Of the True and Visible Markes of the Catholique Churche* (London 1582), 45th page (unnumbered).

attack into a systematic series of applications of skeptical difficulties which would push the Calvinists into an insoluble *crise pyrrhonienne.* This development is due to two ardent debaters of the Jesuit order, Fathers Jean Gontery and François Veron. The latter, whose presentation we shall follow, is a fabulous character of the Counter-Reformation. Originally one of the Jesuit teachers at La Flèche (when Descartes was a student there), Veron became so facile at Counter-Reform that he was freed from his duties as a teacher, and later freed from his order, to be the official arguer for the faith for the king of France. He was given permission to attend Calvinist meetings and services and to debate with the reformers under protection of the king. His attack was so successful that a consistory of the French Reformed Church forbade ministers to dispute with him.[11] The structure of Veron's attack was to demolish the Calvinist claim that their criterion of faith was Scripture alone, to force them to other criteria, each of which was in turn shown to be inadequate as a rule of faith, and then end with his charge that the reformers are Pyrrhonists.

In his *La Victorieuse Methode pour combattre tous les Ministres: Par la seule Bible,* the argument begins by asking, "How do you know that the books of the Old and New Testaments are Holy Scripture?"[12] The question of canonicity raises a peculiar difficulty. If, for the Calvinists, Scripture is the rule of faith, how do we tell what is Scripture? Calvin's answer, by the inner persuasion of the Holy Spirit, admits that something other than Scripture is the rule of faith, and also raises the problem of the authenticity of this inner persuasion, of distinguishing it from madness, false enthusiasm, etc. To do this, another criterion would be needed, a standard of the veracity of inner persuasion. As St. François de Sales had earlier put the problem:

"Now, let us see what rule they have for telling the canonical books from other ecclesiastical writings: 'The witness' they say, 'and internal persuasion of the Holy Spirit.' O God, what a hiding place, what a fog, what a night. Are we thereby enlightened in such a crucial matter? We ask how one can recognize the canonical books. We would like to have some rule for discerning them, and instead they tell us about what goes on within themselves, which no one can see or know, except the soul itself and its Creator."[13]

11. For information on François Veron's career, see the Abbé P. Feret: *Un Curé de Charenton au XVIIe siècle* (Paris 1881); Feret: *La Faculté de Théologie de Paris et ses Docteurs les plus célèbres, Epoque moderne,* Tome IV, XVIIe Siècle, Revue littéraire (Paris 1906), chap. iii, "François Veron", pp. 53–92; and the article "Veron, François", in the *Catholic Encyclopedia,* XV (New York 1912), pp. 359–360.

12. François Veron: *La victorieuse methode pour combattre tous les Ministres: Par la seule Bible* (Paris 1621), pp. 45–46.

13. St. François de Sales: *Controverses,* p. 169.

In accepting inner persuasion as the rule of Scripture, one should be sure that it was produced by the Holy Spirit, that it really occurred (that is, that the reporter was not lying), that it had universal application to all the faithful, that it was not contradictory, and that it was a better means of deciding religious questions than that of the Church and councils.

But, even if one could tell what book is Scripture, then how could one tell (a) what it says and (b) what we are supposed to believe? The printed words require an interpreter. In spite of the reformers' claims, that the Bible contains clear and express texts, the disagreement among readers like Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli indicate that it is not obvious what is stated. After all, the sacred writings are just "waxen-natured words, not yet senc'd, nor having any certain Interpreter, but fit to be plaid upon diversly by quirks of wit."[14] Every text, Veron claimed, gets its meaning in terms of some interpretation made of the symbols, and then by inferring a meaning from the text. The text doesn't come with a built-in interpretation. It does not contain statements about how various collections of letters are to be read, and what they mean. Any such decision is drawing a consequence not contained in Scripture itself. This involves both abandoning the non-Scriptural claim of the Protestants, that Scripture alone is the rule of faith, as well as presenting a basis for interpretation that is not subject to error. Inner persuasion as the standard for interpretation has all the difficulties mentioned previously in connection with it as a standard of canonicity. It is unverifiable, may be illusory, variable, etc. If the Protestants next retreat to the position that their interpretation consists solely of drawing the obvious logical inferences from what Scripture states, those with the "machine of war" are ready to devastate this new line of defense. First, this is not a Scriptural claim, since Scripture doesn't present any rules of inference. Secondly, due to the fallibility of mankind, one can always be mistaken as to whether one has drawn the proper inferences. If it is always possible that one has erred, one will always be in doubt if one has found the true faith, unless there is an infallible judge of our judgments.[15]

The reformers, forced by this attack to be the defenders of natural reason, claimed that we have a standard for judging inferences–the rules of logic, and also that Jesus and the church fathers reasoned logically.[16] Veron answered that

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14. The English Catholic, John Sergeant: *Sure-Footing in Christianity or Rational Discourses on the Rule of Faith* (London 1665), p. 68.

15. Veron: *Methodes de Traiter des Controverses de Religion* (Paris 1638), Part I, p. 170. (St. Louis University has a copy of this very rare work, and has been kind enough to allow me to use their copy for this study.)

16. Jean Daillé: *La Foy fondée sur les Saintes Escritures. Contre les nouveaux Methodistes.* 2nd Ed. (Charenton 1661), pp. 55–65; Paul Ferry: *La dernier desespoir de la Tradition contre l'Escriture* (Sedan 1618), pp. 119–120 and 185.

the so-called rules of reasoning were set down by a pagan, Aristotle, and why should he be taken as the judge of religious truth? And neither Jesus nor any of the church fathers maintained that their views were true because of the logic involved, but that they were true because they were the Word of God.[17] When some reformers answered that Zeno of Elea, and not Aristotle, was the author of the rules of inference, Veron retorted, "A great objection: that it be Zeno or another; are they better judges of our controversies?"[18] The Calvinist leader, Pierre du Moulin, countered, in his *Elements de la Logique Françoise*, that logic is not based on the opinions of some ancient Greeks, "For there is a natural logic, which men make use of naturally without applying any art. Even the peasants make syllogisms without thinking about it."[19] About this Veron exclaimed, "poor supposed faith, based on the rules of Zeno's logic, or on the force of a peasant's reason."[20] Something as unreliable as the natural reason of a peasant could hardly yield an indubitable faith. Why not accept the decisions of a council instead of those of a peasant? Lastly, Veron asked, since one sometimes draws wrong inferences, how can one be completely sure in *any given instance* that one has not committed a logical error?[21]

Veron summarized his argument against deriving religious truth through reasoning from Scriptural text in eight "Moyens." (1) The conclusions that the reformers have arrived at by inferences are not in Scripture. (2) These inferences are never drawn in Scripture. (3) By using inferences, reason, rather than Scripture, is made the judge of religious truths. (4) Reason can err. (5) Scripture does not say that conclusions derived by logical means are articles of faith. (6) The church fathers did not know the conclusions derived by the reformers. (7) The conclusions, at best, are only probable. (8) Even a necessarily true conclusion drawn from Scripture is not an article of faith, because nothing can be unless it be revealed by God.[22]

With this type of argumentation, Veron was trying to create a special kind of skeptical crisis for his Protestant opponents. Unlike the "skepticism with regard to reason" and the "skepticism with regard to the senses" that Montaigne and Charron had developed, Veron intended only to present a skepticism with

17. Veron: *Methodes de Traiter*, Part I, pp. 169–170. 18. *Ibid.*, Part I, p. 169.

19. Pierre Du Moulin: *Elements de la Logique Francoise* (Geneva 1625), pp. 3–4.

20. Veron: *Victorieuse Methode*, p. 67.

21. Veron: *Methodes de Traiter*, Part I, p. 177. If one checks one's reasoning by the rules of logic, this leads to the problem of whether the checking is correct. Cf. David Hume: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge ed. (Oxford 1949), Book I, Part IV, sec. 1, pp. 180–183.

22. Veron: *Methodes de Traiter*, Part I, where the 8 Moyens are stated in detail, argued for, and defended against objections.

regard to the *uses* of sense and reason in religious matters. In terms of this, he tried to show that once the reformers denied there was an infallible judge, they could have no guaranteed faith because they had no defensible rule of faith. Every criterion of religious knowledge they adopted–Scripture, inner persuasion, reason–was shown to be doubtful if applied to religious questions. The Calvinists could not obtain religious certainty because any standards they employed could be undermined by Veron's type of skepticism.

The hard-pressed Calvinists tried various ways of dealing with Veron's attack, treating it as a complete skepticism. The French reformer, Jean Daillé, attempted to show the *reductio ad absurdum* of Veron's onslaught, that if it were applied to books other than Scripture, we could be certain of nothing, no council, church father, writer, etc.[23] Veron merely replied that this showed the desperation of such people. When they were shown to have no firm basis for their views, all that they could do was drift into complete skepticism, and become "*Daillé Minister of Carenton, new Pyrrhonian*, & indifferent in Religion."[24] When Pierre du Moulin made the fatal admission, in order to evade Veron's attack, that no man could judge the religious controversy with absolute certainty, he too showed himself a "new Pyrrhonian." Veron proclaimed, "poor religion, without certainty, abandoned to the discretion of each particular bungler or other."[25] Religion, on Du Moulin's basis, had become a matter of personal idiosyncracy, and no longer claimed to be true. Another French Calvinist, Paul Ferry, fought back by insisting on the perfection of natural reasoning, and by denying the skeptical claims about the complete fallibility of human nature.[26] Veron pointed out that this answer is beside the point. "Who doubts it [that there is a basis for our rationality]? But none of this suffices as the foundation of an article of faith, for none of it is the Word of God, & to believe is only to accept something as true, because God has said it."[27] Hence, according to Veron, our reason may be perfectly sound, but this still would not overcome a skepticism with regard to employing reason in establishing the articles of faith. Even theological reasoning, which he said could be "necessary and certain," is inadequate to prove that a proposition is a religious truth, unless God has also revealed it.[28]

Thus, by skillful use of the "new machine of war," the counter-reformers

23. Daillé: *Traicté de l'employ des Saincts Peres, pour le iugement des differends, qui sont auiourd'hui en la Religion* (Geneva 1632), chap. 1.

24. Veron: *Du vray Juge et Jugement des differents qui sont auiourd'hui en la Religion; Ou est respondu au sieur Daillé Ministre de Charenton, nouveau Pyrrhonien, & indifferent en Religion, contraire à ses colleagues & à son party* (Paris n. d.).

25. Veron: *Victorieuse Methode*, p. 58.

26. Ferry: *Dernier desespoir de la Tradition*, esp. pp. 146–186.

27. Veron: *Methodes de Traiter*, Part. I, p. 170.

28. *Ibid.*, Part. I, p. 197.

enmeshed the Calvinists in a series of difficulties. First the problem of the location and intelligibility of Scripture is raised, and then the need for a standard or judge is pointed out. Next the reformers are pressed into adopting various strategically indefensible positions regarding the basis or standard of their faith. They are forced to retreat to Calvin's citadel, that inner persuasion assures us of the truth and true meaning of Scripture, and this is immediately destroyed by one of the old skeptical bombshells. Next, the reformers are driven to defending a most uncomfortable position, that human reason is capable of telling what Scripture says, and drawing proper inferences therefrom. Then, Veron's skepticism with regard to use of reason in religion carries the day, leaving the reformers defenseless, holding a book whose authenticity they cannot establish, whose meaning they can never be sure of, and only the fallible instrument, man's faculties of the senses and reason, to employ to find the faith, a task one could never be sure the instrument could perform.

But the "new machine of war" appears to possess a peculiar recoil mechanism which has the strange effect of engulfing the target and the gunner in a common catastrophe, as the reformers pointed out. If Veron's arguments were accepted, no written work at all could be accurately fathomed and comprehended. The denial that man, aided by his natural faculties of reason and the senses, is the judge of what something said would have devastating consequences, as the Calvinists Daillé, La Placette, and Boullier, the Anglican Glanvill, the non-Conformist Ferguson, and the philosopher Leibniz pointed out. Not only would the reformer be left at sea in determining what his faith was, but so would everyone else. The Catholic who appealed to the church fathers would be beset with the same difficulties that Veron had raised. How do you know which books are those of the church fathers, how do you know what they say? The appeal to papal authority would be met with another application of Veron's argument. How does one tell who is the pope, what he has said, whether one has understood it correctly? If the believer is possessed of fallible faculties, and cannot trust them in reading Scripture, can he trust them any better in locating the pope, in hearing him, in interpreting him?[29]

The character of the alliance between the counter-reformers and the skeptics

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29. Cf. Daillé: *Traicté de l'employ des Saincts Peres,* chap. 1; Jean La Placette: *Of the Incurable Scepticism of the Church of Rome* (London 1688); David-Renaud Boullier: *Le Pyrrhonisme de l'Eglise Romaine (Amsterdam 1757); Joseph Glanvill:* ΛΟΓΟΥ ΘΡΗΣΚΕΙΑ: *or a Seasonable Recommendation and Defence of Reason, In the Affairs of Religion; Against Infidelity, Scepticism, and Fanaticisms of all sorts* (London 1670), pp. 32–33; Robert Ferguson: *The Interest of Reason in Religion* (London 1675), p. 190; and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: *Theodicée* (Amsterdam 1710), p. 74.

in France is indicated by the self-destructive character of the "new machine of war." The alliance was not merely, as Bredvold has suggested,[30] for strategic purposes. It also encompassed, for many of the French counter-reformers, the ideological core of their defense. They could not be hurt by the skeptical bombardment because they had no position to defend. Their faith was grounded in no rational or factual claim, but in an accepted, and unquestioned faith in the Catholic tradition. They saw, as Maldonat had claimed, that if they once doubted this faith by traditional acceptance, they too would be destroyed in the same way as the reformers.[31] And so one finds an implicit fideism in many of the French counter-reformers, which is made explicit in the writings of the French skeptics from Montaigne to La Mothe Le Vayer.

Beginning with Hervet and Maldonat, there are many indications that the leading French counter-reformers subscribed to a type of fideism like that developed in the views of Montaigne and his followers. In the preface to his translation of Sextus Empiricus, Hervet had insisted on the non-rational character of the faith, and need to believe rather than know. The attempt to discover a science of religious knowledge leads to heresy and disaster. The boon of skepticism to the Christian religion, according to Hervet, lies in its destroying the dogmatic philosopher, so that faith alone remains as the road to religious truth.[32]

Maldonat seems also to have stressed the non-rational character of religious belief, and that pure faith must precede any religious knowledge. It is this that may well explain his friendship and apparent agreement with Montaigne.[33] The burden of Maldonat's theology appears to have been to free religious belief from dialectical arguments, and to attack the presumption of the rational man trying to judge of religious matters. The basis of Christianity is the faith as set forth in Scripture and tradition. "It should be enough for us to answer, in one word, that we are Christians, not philosophers. The Word of God is our stay, and while we have this clear and plain, we lay little stress on the dictates of mere natural reason."[34]

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30. Louis I. Bredvold: *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* (Univ. of Michigan Studies in English, Vol. XII), (Ann Arbor), pp. 76 ff.

31. Maldonat: *Commentary on the Holy Gospels,* Vol. I, pp. xix–xx and Vol. II, p. 109–110.

32. Hervet, preface to Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos.* See also Hervet's appeal to faith alone as the foundation of his faith in his *Epistre envoyée à un quidam fauteur des nouveaux Evangeliques, en laquelle est clairement monstré, que hors l'Eglise Catholique n'y nul salut* (Paris 1561), p. 12.

33. Cf. Aymonier, "Un Ami de Montaigne. Le Jésuite Maldonat", pp. 14–18. On p. 18, Maldonat is quoted as saying "Si non credideritis neque intellegetis", and "credere est assentiri", which Aymonier interprets as close to Montaigne's fideism in the *Apologie.*

34. Maldonat: *Commentary on the Holy Gospels,* Vol. II, pp. 420–421.

In many other counter-reformers, the fideistic element is indicated in part only negatively, in that no rational defense is put forth for their religion. It is also suggested through guilt-by-association with those theologians and philosophers whom they admired. The Cardinal du Perron (of whom the Pope is supposed to have said at a meeting of the College of Cardinals, "Let us pray that God will inspire the Cardinal du Perron, so that he will persuade us of what He wishes,")[35] in his controversial literature spent virtually no time presenting evidence *for* his cause, but devoted himself primarily to showing the inadequacy of the Calvinist theory of religious knowledge. But the Cardinal was a friend of Montaigne's adopted daughter, Mlle. de Gournay, and a great admirer of the fideistic theological writings of Montaigne's adopted son, Pierre Charron.[36] A story about du Perron indicates his evaluation of the merits of human reason in theological matters. He was invited to dinner by the king of France, Henri III, and gave a discourse against atheism, and offered proofs of the existence of God. When the king expressed his pleasure at this, and praised du Perron, the latter said, "Sire, today I have proven, by very strong and evident reasons, that there is a God. Tomorrow, Sire, if it pleases Your Majesty to give me another audience, I will show and prove to you by just as good and evident reasons that there is no God at all." The king, apparently not a fideistic Christian, got angry, and threw out his guest.[37]

There are some faint signs of fideism even in the life and works of the most spiritual of the French counter-reformers, St. François de Sales. Although in his *Controverses* he defends the values of natural reason, one of the few modern writers whom he cites as an authority on religious matters is Montaigne. An odd passage from Montaigne is quoted in defense of miracles in order "de prouver la foy par miracles."[38] St. François not only approved of Montaigne to the extent of using him as a witnes of the faith, and in the role of a learned doctor, he was also friendly with some of the skeptic's disciples. In spite of having condemned those "of our age who profess to put all in doubt," St. François corresponded with Mlle. de Gournay, and encouraged and directed her in charitable endeavors.

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35. Quoted in the life of Du Perron, prefixed to *Les diverses œuvres de l'illustrissime Cardinal Du Perron* (Paris 1622), p. 22.

36. Jean Duvergier du Hauranne (Saint-Cyran), mentions Du Perron's admiration of Charron in *La Somme des fautes et faussetez capitales contenues en la Somme Theologique du Pere François Garasse de la Compagnie de Jesus*, (Paris 1626), Tome II, p. 324. On Du Perron's relations with Mlle. de Gournay, see Mario Schiff: *La fille d'alliance de Montaigne. Marie de Gournay* (Paris 1910), p. 37.

37. Pierre de L'Estoile: *Mémoires-Journaux*, Tome II, *Journal de Henri III*, 1581 to 1586 (Paris 1888), entry for Nov. 1583, pp. 140–141.

38. St. François de Sales: *Controverses*, p. 328, and "Notes préparatoires".

And he chose for his secretary Jean-Pierre Camus, the Bishop of Bellay, who openly proclaimed himself a follower of Montaigne and Sextus Empiricus and advocated, as we shall see, a very strong fideism.[39]

One can cite other indications of the links between the counter-reformers and the fideists. Apparently even to Montaigne's surprise, the Vatican expressed only the mildest disapproval of the views in the *Essais,* and invited him to devote himself to writing in defense of the Catholic Church.[40] Many of Montaigne's disciples were protected and promoted by Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin.[41] Also, Claude Dormy, Bishop of Boulogne, was a great admirer of Pierre Charron's most skeptical writing, *La Sagesse,* a didactic rendition of Montaigne's Pyrrhonism. In Charron's letters, while composing the book, and while trying to get it printed and approved, there is constant reference to Bishop Dormy's admiration for the work, and his help in getting an approbation. In fact, the bishop disapproved of Charron's slight modifications of his complete fideism in the face of opposition from the Sorbonne theologians.[42] And in 1642 the king's confessor, the Jesuit Nicolas Caussin, printed *La Cour Sainte,* which contains an adaption of Charron's second book of *La Sagesse,* the core of his views.[43]

These indications of approval of fideism or fideists on the part of some of the French counter-reformers may be explicable in terms of the method employed by these people to fight Calvinism, a method which is essentially the application of certain problems of the Greek Pyrrhonists to the religious controversies of the time. Some of the Catholics try to avoid the devastation caused by their method by implicitly adhering to a Christianity based on faith alone. The skeptical theory of religious knowledge advanced by Montaigne and his disciples provides a theoretical framework in which the "machine of war" can operate without destroying the gunner, a framework in which a total skepticism on the rational plane becomes the preparation for the revelation of the true faith. An examination of the theology of the Montaignians will, I believe, indicate a philosophical basis for the alliance of skeptics and orthodox Catholic leaders.

Although Montaigne was certainly not the first Christian fideist, nor even the

39. Cf. St. François de Sales, letter to M. Celse-Bénigne de Chantal, 8 Decembre 1610, in *Œuvres,* Tome XIV, (Letters, Tome IV), (Annecy 1906), p. 377; Alan M. Boase: *The Fortunes of Montaigne: A History of the Essays in France, 1580–1669* (London 1935), p. 61; and Schiff: *La fille d'alliance de Montaigne,* pp. 29–30.

40. Michel de Montaigne: *Journal de Voyage* (Paris 1909), pp. 250–252 and 274.

41. For example, Gabriel Naudé and La Mothe Le Vayer were protegées of Richelieu and Mazarin.

42. Cf. L. Auvray: "Lettres de Pierre Charron à Gabriel Michel de la Rochemaillet", *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France,* I (1894), esp. pp. 323–327.

43. Cf. Boase: *Fortunes of Montaigne,* p. 186.

first Christian Pyrrhonist, his presentation of this theological view in the long, rambling "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" is the most influential work of its kind in modern history. Appearing a score of years after the first printing of Sextus Empiricus, it served to popularize the ideas of the Greek skeptics and to develop the theory that Hervet had stated in his preface to his edition of Sextus (the new Pyrrhonism), Christian skepticism or fideistic Catholicism. The bulk of the "Apologie," as Villey has shown, was written during Montaigne's *crise pyrrhonienne* in 1575-76, occasioned by his meditations on the writings of Sextus Empiricus.[44] In the "Apologie," Montaigne purports to be defending the views of Raimond Sebond, a fifteenth-century theologian whose work he had translated. Sebond was an extreme rationalist who claimed that he could give complete evidence for Christianity from natural science and by reasoning. Montaigne, in answering the objection that Sebond's reasons are rather weak, unleashes a general skepticism about the possibility of men being able to offer adequate evidence for any view whatsoever. The end result is the gradual, and somewhat haphazard, development of a thorough-going philosophical and theological Pyrrhonism, showing the unreliability of our sense information and of our rational abilities, the presumptuousness of man trying to measure the universe, the inability of man to uncover any defensible criterion of knowledge in any area whatsoever, etc. All the traditional arguments and paradoxes of Sextus Empiricus are poured out to overwhelm one, and show the futility of man's claims to knowledge. And because of our natural inability to reach the truth about any subject whatsoever, the one thing that we can hold on to, Montaigne tells us, is our faith, since this is not based on our dubious faculties, or on unreliable evidence, but is a pure, incomprehensible gift from God.

"The share we have in the knowledge of truth, such as it is, has not been acquired by our own powers. God has taught us that sufficiently well through the witnesses he chose out of the common people, simple and ignorant men, in order to impart to us his wonderful secrets; our faith is not of our own acquiring, it is purely the gift of another's bounty. It is not by our reasoning, but by outside authority and command. We are therein assisted by the weakness more than by the strength of our judgment, by our blindness more than by our clearsightedness. By means of our ignorance, more than our knowledge, do we become wise in this heavenly wisdom. It is not to be wondered at if our natural and earthly powers are unable to conceive that supernatural and heavenly knowledge; let us bring to it nothing of our own but obedience and submission."[45]

44. Pierre Villey: *Sources et Evolution des Essais de Montaigne* (Paris 1908), Vol. I, pp. 218 and 365, and Vol. II, pp. 164–165.

45. Montaigne: "Apology for Raimond Sebond", *The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. by

And then Montaigne gives his Scriptural text, for it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will cast down the learning of the learned. Where is the wise man? Where is the teacher (scribe)? Where is the reasoner according to the time? Has not God rendered foolish the wisdom of this world? For since the world has not by wisdom known God, it has pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (I Cor. 1 : 19–21).

This marriage of complete skepticism and acceptance of Christianity by faith alone, complete fideism, Montaigne offered as his explanation for remaining a Catholic and rejecting the Reformation. Since we have no reason for preferring one thing to another, for making a choice, all we can do is remain in the condition in which God has put us.

"Otherwise I could not keep from perpetual rolling. Thus, by the grace of God, I have kept wholly, without being stirred or troubled by conscience, within the ancient tenets of our religion, amidst the many sects and divisions that our times have brought forth."[46]

Since all is in doubt, on the rational level, our security remains only in an unquestioned faith, based on nothing but the grace of God. Those who would choose are in a hopeless plight, since then evidence becomes relevant, and all the difficulties of skepticism must be resolved before one can make a rational decision.

The skeptical basis of Catholic Christianity is developed further by Montaigne's chosen disciple, Father Pierre Charron, one of the most prominent theologians and preachers of his day. He has long been under a cloud, partly due to the fact that neither his thought nor his style reached the heights of Montaigne, and partly because he has a reputation for *libertinism.* Charron, whose success in theology came in middle life, met Montaigne towards the end of the latter's career. Their friendship ripened rapidly. Montaigne found in the preacher an ideal intellectual heir. In his will, he adopted Charron and left him a large worldly *and* spiritual legacy. The only gift that we know passed from the French Socrates to his disciple during the former's life is an heretical work, the catechism of the liberal reformer, Ochino. After Montaigne's death, Charron revealed in his writings the actual extent of his legacy, the magnificent union of skepticism and Catholicism.[47]

E. J. Trechmann (New York & London n. d.), Vol. I, p. 495; and *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne,* ed. by Pierre Villey, Tome II (Paris 1922), p. 230.

46. Montaigne: *Essays,* Trechmann ed., Vol. II, p. 14, and Villey ed., Tome II, pp. 324–325.

47. For information about Charron, see J. B. Sabrié: *De l'Humanisme au Rationalisme,* Pierre Charron (1541–1603). *L'homme, l'œuvre, l'influence* (Paris 1913). The copy of Ochino is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Rés. D2.2812.

Bereft of his master, the preacher devoted himself to expounding Montaigne's ideas didactically, in tract form. First he composed his theological opus, *Les Trois Veritez,* intended primarily as a Counter-Reformation blast at Calvinism. But to set the stage, and establish the first truth, that there is a God, Charron offered a "Discourse on Knowledge of God," in which he linked Montaigne's fideism to one of the great traditions of Christian theology, that of the negative theologians. He argued that God's nature and existence were unknowable because of "our feebleness, and the greatness of God."[48] The infinitude of God surpasses all possibility of knowledge, because to know is to define, to limit, and God is beyond all limitations. And so, the greatest philosopher and the most knowing theologian do not know God more or less than the humblest artisan.[49] But the feebleness and incapacity of man is such that even if God were not infinite, we still could not know Him. Here Charron offered a brief summary of the reasons for skepticism about human knowledge, and then declared, "O piteous and vile thing that man and all his wisdom is; O foolish and enraged presumption of trying to know God."[50] The only possible way of knowing God is negatively, knowing what He is not. The true positive knowledge of God is perfect ignorance.[51] Having combined the negative theologian's claim that God is unknowable because He is infinite, and the skeptic's claim that God is unknowable because of the feebleness of man's capacities, and man's inability to know anything, Charron then uses this double-barrelled fideism to attack the atheists. Their arguments that God does not exist depend upon defining what God is, and then drawing absurd conclusions. But their definition involves measuring God in human terms, and their conclusions carry no weight, since the atheists do not and cannot know what they are talking about.[52] The rest of Charron's *Trois Veritez* is an attempt to make theism, Christianity, and Catholicism plausible and to denounce Calvinism.

His next work, *La Sagesse,* develops at much greater length the feebleness of man and Montaigne's advice as to what to do about it. This treatise, one of the first philosophical works written in a modern language, is little more than Montaigne's views presented in organized form. One of the unique features of it is Charron's separation of ethics from religious considerations for, perhaps, the first time in modern philosophy.

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48. Pierre Charron: *Les trois veritez,* (Paris 1595), p. 17. 49. *Ibid.,* pp. 19–20.

50. Charron: *Les trois veritez,* dernière edition (Paris 1635), p. 15, in *Toutes les œuvres de Pierre Charron* (Paris 1635).

51. *Ibid.,* p. 18, and *Trois veritez,* Paris 1595 ed., p. 26.

52. Charron: *Trois veritez,* Paris 1595 ed., pp. 67–70. It is interesting to note that Sextus Empiricus is listed as an atheist on p. 67.

The argument of *La Sagesse* is to show that "the true science and the true study of man is man,"[53] and that the understanding of man leads to knowledge of God in a rather startling way. In knowing ourselves, we discover our feebleness, first of our senses and our sense knowledge, and then of our intellect and what it teaches us. We discover we are but animals, and not very impressive ones. The lugubrious details about the vanity and misery of man, and of his pretensions to knowledge, lead to the fideistic conclusion that "The only principles man has are those God has revealed to him. Everything else is only dreams or smoke."[54]

Having learned this much about himself, the wise man tries to rid himself of all his presumption and vanity by becoming a complete skeptic and emptying his mind of all his beliefs and opinions. This sort of attitude "is the thing which does more service to piety, religion, and divine operation than anything else there is."[55] Cleansed of all beliefs and opinions, man can present himself "blanc, nud & prest" before God to receive the revelation and accept it on faith alone. The advantage of this complete fideism, Charron asserted, is that one cannot become a heretic: "Never will an Academic or a Pyrrhonist be a heretic." By having no opinions, one cannot have wrong opinions. One will only have the views that God imposes.[56] For the rest, the wise man lives according to nature. His moral life, apart from God's commands, is based on no theory. He follows the dictates of his nature, thus being a noble savage. This is the preparatory stage to grace. Until God shows us what is true and what to do, we are complete skeptics and natural men. In this state, and in this state only, can we be free from heresy and error and be ready for divine guidance.[57]

In his explanation of his views, *Le Petit Traicté de Sagesse*, Charron claimed his fideism is similar to the theory of the mystics regarding how to prepare the soul for God. The Charronian sage has purged himself, thrown away the false guides that could lead him astray. It is up to God to save him and show him the way. And in relying on God's action, Charron claimed his theory is different from classical Pyrrhonism.[58]

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53. Charron: *La sagesse*, in *Toutes les œuvres de Pierre Charron* (Paris 1635), p. 1. (Each work in this volume has its own pagination.)

54. *Ibid.*, Livre I, chaps. x–xl. The quotation is on p. 144.

55. *Ibid.*, Livre II, chaps. i–ii. The quotation is on p. 21. On Charron's "method of doubt", see Sabrié: *Humanisme au Rationalisme*, chap. xii, esp. pp. 303–319; and R. H. Popkin: "Charron and Descartes: The Fruits of Systematic Doubt", *Journal of Philosophy*, LII (1954), p. 832.

56. Charron: *La sagesse*, Livre II, chap. ii, p. 22.

57. *Ibid.*, Livre III; and Charron: *Traicté de Sagesse* (Paris 1635), p. 226. (This work is also known as *Petit Traicté de Sagesse*.)

58. Charron: *Petit Traicté*, pp. 223–226.

According to Charron, the Calvinists are those who will not accept the traditional means by which we have been led to God, but instead have the arrogant pride and presumption to think that some human authority or effort is capable of finding a better and surer means to the true religion. Calvinism is one more type of dogmatism, but it is the most dangerous, in that it tries to answer the most important questions for man by man and tries to challenge the age-old paths to God. Its effect, in attempting to make man the measure of religion, will be catastrophic in destroying the only solid foundation we have, the revelation, and will leave us with nothing that we can be certain of.[59]

This statement of complete fideism was supplemented by that of other Montaignians. Jean-Pierre Camus, 1584–1654, who became bishop of Bellay and secretary to St. François de Sales and spent a good deal of time fighting against the monastic orders, employed the same type of total skepticism as the basis of his faith. His most theoretical work, *Essay Sceptique*, written when he was only nineteen in 1603 before he became a priest, is a lengthy and somewhat novel presentation of the Pyrrhonism of Montaigne and Sextus Empiricus. When it was printed a few years later, Camus was a little apologetic in that the work might not be considered sufficiently serious for a bishop. But, as Villey and Boase have indicated, although Camus changed his mind about Montaigne's style and form and later condemned them, he did not give up his thought and even defended Montaigne against the charge of atheism.[60]

The *Essay Sceptique* was written, the author tells us, when "I was then just fresh from the shop of Sextus Empiricus."[61] The work consists of first presenting the arguments for the Academic skeptic view that nothing can be known, then the opposite thesis, dogmatism, that something can be known, and finally Camus' view, Pyrrhonism, that we ought to suspend judgment on the question whether anything can be known or not. In the course of developing his case, Camus set forth his fideism, claiming that faith without reason is the best faith, since it is not erected on a shaky foundation that a new Archimedes will overthrow. For "there is nothing true among men except what it has pleased God to reveal to

59. This is the general thesis of Charron's third book of *Les Trois veritez*, esp. chaps. i–iii and xii.

60. On Camus, see Boase: *The Fortunes of Montaigne*, pp. 114–134; Pierre Villey: *Montaigne devant la posterité*, (Paris 1935), pp. 185–234; and Julien-Eymard d'Angers: *Les "Diversités de J.-P. Camus"* (1609–1618), (n. p. 1952).

61. Jean-Pierre Camus: "Essay Sceptique", in *Les diversitez de Messire Jean Pierre Camus, Evesque & Seigneur de Bellay, Prince de l'Empire*, Tome IV (Paris 1610), Livre XV, chap. iii, p. 187*.

(Only every other page is numbered, so I have designated the unnumbered ones by the number on the preceding page, plus an asterisk.)

them. All the rest is only dreams, wind, smoke, opinion."[62] Therefore, we ought to accept the revelation with humility. Our theology is rightly based only on *la foi ancienne,* and hence cannot err, since it comes directly from God. Those who won't accept this fideistic basis for religion, and try to develop a rational road to the faith, only engender error, heresy, reform theories, etc. These are all the fruits of man's vanity, that he believes his reason can figure out the truth.[63] (And, as Villey pointed out, "The fear of Protestant rationalism is at the base of Camus' skepticism.")[64] The solution to man's problem, Camus tells us, is to develop the Pyrrhonian suspense of judgment, which brings us to God in that we recognize our infirmities and are content with what God tells us.[65]

This type of fideism reaches its apex with François de la Mothe Le Vayer, "le voluptueux incrédule," who inherited the mantle of Montaigne from Mlle. de Gournay. La Mothe Le Vayer rose to eminence under the patronage of Richelieu and became the teacher of the king's brother and a member of the *Academie française.* Although hardly an original mind, his skepticism is probably the most far-going of any of the Montaignians up to his time. And in spite of the constant attacks on his religion, or lack of it, from his contemporaries like Guez de Balzac and Antoine Arnauld, down to the most recent studies of Pintard, Julien-Eymard d'Angers, and Grenier, almost all his writings include a constant appeal to, and defense of, an extremely fideistic kind of Christianity.[66]

La Mothe Le Vayer's first love was Sextus Empiricus, whom he called "our master," "the divine Sextus," "the author of our new Decalogue," etc. The endless theme of La Mothe Le Vayer's writings, from his early dialogues down

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62. *Ibid.*, p. 254. See also pp. 224–226, 244* and 278.

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 274–278.

64. Villey: *Montaigne devant la posterité,* p. 202.

65. Camus: *"Essay Sceptique"*, p. 335*.

66. On La Mothe Le Vayer's career, see the introduction by Ernest Tisserand to La Mothe Le Vayer's *Deux dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens* (Paris 1922); Boase: *Fortunes of Montaigne,* chap. xviii; and René Pintard: *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle* (Paris 1943), 2e partie, chap. I, sec. iii, and 3e partie, chap. III. Criticisms of La Mothe Le Vayer's religious views appear in Antoine Arnauld: *De la necessité de la Foy en Jesus-Christ pour être sauvé* (Paris 1701), Tome II, esp. pp. 181–221; Guez de Balzac: "Lettres de Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac", pub. by Philippe Tamizey de Larroque, in *Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France, publiées par les soins du Ministre de l'Instruction Publique. Mélanges historiques,* Tome I, (Paris 1873), pp. 393–820. Recent criticisms appear in Pintard, *op. cit., loc. cit.;* Jean Grenier: "Le sceptique masqué: La Mothe Le Vayer", *Table Ronde,* XXII, (1949), pp. 1504–1513; and Julien-Eymard d'Angers: "Stoicisme et 'libertinage' dans l'œuvre de François La Mothe Le Vayer", *Revue des Sciences Humaines,* Fasc. 75, (July-Sept. 1954), pp. 259–284.

to his final soliloquies, is that Pyrrhonism is the philosophy closest to Christianity, and that the message of St. Paul is really the same as that of Sextus. Skepticism teaches us the vanity and presumption of any attempt to understand nature and God, and the need for revelation. Further, the empty hopes of dogmatic men of finding truths about nature and God, of establishing sciences, are genuinely impious. If *any* science were possible, this would mean that God was limited and measurable by human standards in terms of His Nature and His Creation, and that God is not free and all-powerful. The message of the skeptics is that man cannot and should not understand, and that those who try to comprehend are plunging towards heresy and impiety. The only knowledge we can have is the revelation it pleases God to give us. The Christian skeptic is best able to receive the Divine Word because, as Montaigne and Charron had argued, his mind has been purged of errors and presumptions. But suppose the skeptic doubts even the Word of God? If he does, it is his catastrophic mistake. Pyrrhonism should perish at the foot of the altar. The skeptic ought not to carry his doubts into religious affairs but should submit to the revelation. No rational inquiry assists or abets the discovery and recognition of divine truth. All one can do is to accept it on faith, without the aid of evidence.[67]

The skeptics from Montaigne to La Mothe Le Vayer emphazise more and more the non-rational, non-evidential character of religion, and avow complete adherence to the Catholic Church. The innovators, the reformers, have rejected the traditional revelation, and have offered reasons for their new faith. Als Mlle. de Gournay pointed out, Christian skeptics like Montaigne and herself accept as the touchstone of true religion "the Holy law of our Fathers, their tradition and their authority. Who can tolerate these new Titans of this century, who think they will reach knowledge of God by their means, and circumscribe Him, His Works, and their beliefs in the limits of their methods and their reason: willing to accept nothing as true, if it does not seem probable to them."[68]

This alliance between Pyrrhonism and Catholicism, as advocated by the Montaignians and employed by various French counter-reformers, was, I believe,

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67. These themes appear in many of La Mothe Le Vayer's works. Cf. his *Cinq dialogues faits à l'imitation des anciens, par Oratius Tubero* (Mons 1671), esp. the dialogue, "De la diversité des religions"; his *Prose chagrine*, in *Œuvres de François de La Mothe Le Vayer* (Paris 1669), Vol. IX, esp. pp. 359–367; his *Opuscule ou petit traitté sceptique sur cette façon de parler, n'avoir pas le sens commun*, in *Œuvres*, Vol. IX, esp. pp. 290–291; his *Discours pour montrer que les doutes de la philosophie sceptique sont de grand usage dans les sciences*, in *Œuvres*, Vol. XV, pp. 61–124; and his "De Pyrrhon, et de la secte sceptique", in *De la vertu des payens, Œuvres*, Vol. V, pp. 212–236.

68. Quoted in Boase: *Fortunes of Montaigne*, p. 61.

an underlying theory of the Counter-Reformation in France. The strategy of fighting the Calvinists by destroying their arguments through skepticism and reducing them to complete skepticism is intelligible in terms of the theory of fideists like Montaigne and Charron. The Catholic controversialists developed a skeptical method for destroying Calvinism. But this method would destroy any theory whatsoever, in spite of the restrictions suggested by Veron. Therefore the only way the Catholics could avoid committing intellectual suicide while defeating their opponents was to have no theory. They could advocate their Catholicism on faith alone while demolishing their enemies by engulfing them in skeptical difficulties. The skeptics provided the ammunition for the attack and the rationale for the defense. The strategy of attack is just an application of the standard Pyrrhonian puzzles to a special area. A basis for defense is the theological view offered by the Montaignians as their "nouveau Pyrrhonisme." Thus in the struggle of the Counter-Reformation the skeptics provide a theoretical framework and the weapons, are the armchair generals, and the counter-reformers apply the new skepticism to the new situation by developing a skepticism with regard to the uses of reason and sense in religious matters.

The Catholics seem to have been unaffected by the disastrous consequences of their method pointed out by the Protestants. The counter-reformers were unconcerned, perhaps, because they had accepted the Pyrrhonists' claim that skepticism is the way to God. Man's efforts are purely negative, eliminating false and doubtful views from his mind. Any positive content that remains is supplied by God, not man. As long as God is on the Catholic side, the general doubts of the Montaignians and the applied doubts of Veron serve only the good effect of curing one of false beliefs and keeping one from false religions. At least if one gives up the attempt to understand, one is saved from reaching heretical conclusions. And God through revelation keeps one in the true religion. The rational Catholic and the rational Protestant may both be demolished by the "machine of war," but the man of faith will be saved through God, not reason or evidence.

If one says that delusion is as likely an outcome as revelation from this sort of fideism, the answer is that by not thinking one cannot be responsible. It is up to God alone. If the revelation is given and pressed upon us, the relinquishing of a human approach to religion leaves one at both the mercy and protection of God.

Any change from the traditional Church involves a human decision as to what is right or wrong in religion. One should have adequate reasons before making such an important decision. Then the counter-reformers and their skeptical allies try to make the Calvinists guilty of what was considered the Socinian heresy,

that reason is the measure of religious truth.[69] But if the skeptical arguments showed the unreliability of human rational faculties for this purpose and the true religion was constantly revealed, then the reformers' approach was fruitless and unnecessary. And while the method of the counter-reformers embroiled the Calvinists in a skeptical crisis, the counter-reformers themselves could consider their own position secure, since it was based on faith buttressed by the unquestioned fact that for them God was on their side, providing them with the true revelation and the Church as an infallible judge. Thus the types of targets the counter-reformers could destroy with their machine of war could not include their own fideistic fortress.

The Calvinists were made the defenders of the citadel of dogmatism, the efficacy of man's rational faculties, while the counter-reformers were safe on the rock of faith.

This ingenious alliance that routed the Huguenots in the ideological sphere, while Richelieu's policy reduced them in the political sphere, had a difficulty similar to that of the Hitler-Stalin pact. Its success hinged on the sincerity of the participants, on their religious sincerity. If the aim of the Montaignians was not to secure Catholicism but to envelop all religions in doubt so that agnosticism would triumph, then the alliance had taken away from the Catholics the same means of defense that they had already taken away from the Protestants.

With the growing influence of the Christian skeptics in the early seventeenth century, and possibly from knowing them too well, some of the orthodox became suspicious that the new theological base, pure fideism, might really be *libertinism*. The first suggestions that perhaps the Catholics had been betrayed appeared in the savage attacks of Fathers Garasse and Mersenne on the skeptics. Garasse, a bombastic figure of the early seventeenth century, gained much notoriety for his vicious attacks on Charron. He insisted that it was only the horrendous details which he heard in confession from people who claimed they were led to corruption by Charron's "breviare des libertins" that made him speak out.[70]

Garasse's first attack, *La Doctrine curieuse des Beaux Esprits de ce temps, ou pretendus tels,* of 1623, was a work of more than one thousand pages against all sorts of "libertins" and "athees" of whom Charron is the chief one. The book

69. Cf. Pierre Bayle: *Dictionnaire historique et critique,* art. "Socin, Fauste", closing comments.

70. On Garasse, see Boase: *Fortunes of Montaigne,* pp. 164–170; Frédéric Lachèvre: *Le procès du poete Theophile de Viau* (Paris 1909); and Joseph Lecler: "Un adversaire des libertins au début du XVII[e] siècle–Le P. Francois Garasse (1585–1631)", *Etudes,* CCIX (1931), pp. 553–572.

is mainly just a series of insults and unsupported charges.[71] When the priest, François Ogier, rose to Charron's defense and said, "Garasse my friend, ... the books of Charron are a little high-brow for minds as low and vulgar as yours,"[72] Garasse set to work to document his charges. In his *Apologie* he listed a series of impious and atheistic propositions that he had found in Charron's writings.[73] Then in his magnum opus, *La Somme Theologique* of 1625, dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu, Garasse worked out his charges in great detail against Charron and his influence, against the *libertins* and the *Atheistes couverts.* Here Garasse charged Charron and the "nouveaux Pyrrhoniens" with being dangerous and secret atheists, since their skepticism bred a religious indifference. Although Garasse himself was somewhat skepticial of rational theology, he saw in the fideism of Charron a vicious type of insincerity whose aim was not to defend the true religion, but rather to destroy it. As far as Garasse could discern, Charron's point was to make the Christian religion ridiculous and to leave people in a libertinism of spirit and actions. The debauchery of the times, the *libre-pensée* of the age, was the effect of the seditious views of Charron.[74]

The attack against Charron by Garasse, and another by Father Mersenne, in his *L'Impiété des Déistes,*[75] began a new era in French intellectual history, that of the crusade against skepticism. The crusaders had grasped the consequences of the alliance and claimed to have seen through the mask of the Montaignians, to have seen that they were playing a double game. In the decades following these initial publications against the "nouveau pyrrhonisme," there are a great many works attacking the skeptical menace and the pernicious irreligious views of Montaigne and Charron (both of whose works ended up on the Index).[76]

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71. Francois Garasse: *La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, ou pretendus tels* (Paris 1623).

72. Francois Ogier: *Judgement et Censure du livre de la Doctrine curieuse de Francois Garasse* (Paris 1623), p. vi.

73. Garasse: *Apologie du Pere Francois Garassus, de la Compagnie de Jesus, pour son livre contre les Atheistes & Libertins de nostre siecle* (Paris 1624), chaps. 21–22.

74. Garasse: *La Somme Theologique des veritez capitales de la Religion Christienne* (Paris 1625), "Advertissemens", and Livre I, pp. 1–111.

75. Marin Mersenne: *L'Impiété des Déistes, Athées, et Libertins de ce temps, combattuë et renversée de point en point par raison tirées de la philosophie et de la théologie* (Paris 1624).

76. Among the attacks on scepticism are Jean Boucher: *Les triomphes de la religion Chrestienne* (Paris 1628); Mersenne: *La verité des sciences, contre les sceptiques ou pyrrhoniens* (Paris 1625); Charles Cotin: *Discours a Theopompe sur les Fort Esprits du temps* (n. p. 1629); Yves de Paris: *La Theologie naturelle,* 3rd ed. (Paris 1641); Jean Bagot: *Apologeticus fidei* (Paris 1644); Jean de Silhon, *Les deux veritez* (Paris 1634); and Charles Sorel: *La science des choses corporelles* (Paris 1634).

The realization that the theoretical defenders of the Counter-Reformation in France might really be advocating the destruction of religion developed slowly. Even after the warnings had been put up, various Catholic leaders defended the alliance and opposed the proffered substitute theories of the Counter-Reformation, the *Somme* of Garasse and the *Meditations* of René Descartes. The danger involved, that the defense of Catholicism offered by the skeptics actually made Catholicism a fortunate accident as far as human beings were concerned, seems to have left many of the French counter-reformers unconcerned. Their immediate interest was the intellectual destruction of Calvinism; if the price necessary to do this was to envelop all human standards of evidence in a total skepticism, they were willing to pay it, and then proclaim with the Montaignians that it was indeed fortunate when one looked without any preconceptions for the true religion, God had luckily revealed the Catholic faith to us. That this happy accident could also be made suspect if the skeptics wished to carry their destructive work this far, at first troubled only people like Mersenne and Garasse.

Mersenne, after sounding the warning, devoted himself to the career of missionary for the new science. In this venture he collaborated with, among others, his skeptical friends Petrus Gassendi, La Mothe Le Vayer, and Samuel Sorbière (who, we are told, could not abide hearing an unkind word about Charron's views or books). In some of Mersenne's correspondence, there are signs that he remained quite sensitive to the dangers of skepticism when applied to religion, and though he was perfectly willing to absorb the Pyrrhonian atmosphere of his time as part of a new "scientific outlook," he was also horrified that it could have irreligious consequences.[77]

Garasse, on the other hand, was a bigot and was determined to destroy the alliance of the skeptics and the counter-reformers. But his efforts were so little appreciated that it was he rather than the Montaignians who was condemned, a sad history later repeated with regard to René Descartes. After Father Ogier's mild defense of Charron came out, a huge diatribe against Garasse appeared, written by one of the most brilliant theologians of the day, the Jansenist leader, Saint-Cyran (Jean Duvergier du Hauranne), in the form of a four-volume folio work, *La Somme des fautes et faussetez capitales contenues en la Somme Theologique du Pere Francois Garasse de la Compagnie de Jesus,* dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu.[78] This was Saint-Cyran's first important work, and was intended

77. On Mersenne's philosophy, and his own type of critique of Pyrrhonism, and fear of religious scepticism, see R. H. Popkin: "Father Mersenne's War Against Pyrrhonism", *Modern Schoolman,* XXXIV (1956–57), pp. 61–78.

78. Jean Duvergier du Hauranne (Saint-Cyran): *La Somme des fautes et faussetez*

to launch a campaign to make Jansenism the position of the Church of France.[79] In the preface, Saint-Cyran accuses Garasse of having "dishonored the Majesty of God." Later he is attacked for having "ruined the faith and religion in all its principal parts,"[80] and for being "the most hideous writer that one has ever seen."[81] After citing all his errors about the Bible, the church fathers, Greek and Roman authors, etc., Saint-Cyran late in the second volume came to the subject of Charron's views. He claimed that he had never read Charron until puzzling about Garasse's statement that this was the most impious, atheistic work ever written, and comparing this with Garasse's indications of its content. When he read Charron he found, contrary to Garasse, that the work was both intelligent and sound, and he could now understand why it was so esteemed by the best Catholic minds in France, like the Cardinal du Perron.[82]

What Saint-Cyran found when he examined Charron was that his views agreed with those of St. Augustine, the authority of the Jansenists. The picture of the feebleness of human reason and the incomprehensibility of God, and the condemnation of man's attempts to measure God, Saint-Cyran saw to be good orthodox Augustinian theology. And so, although he did not defend all Charron's views, Saint-Cyran tried to show, in the course of about a hundred and fifty pages of tirade, that the heir of Montaigne had been unjustly condemned, and that the alliance is in perfect accord with Scripture and the most trustworthy theology.[83]

As a result of this Jansenist defense of Charron, Garasse's attempt to terminate the alliance ended in disaster for him. Saint-Cyran pressed his defense until the theological faculty of the Sorbonne, which had originally given approval to the *Somme Theologique*, censured the work, and declared on September 1, 1926, that this work of Garasse "ought to be entirely condemned, because it contains several heretical, erroneous, scandalous, and rash propositions, and several passages from Holy Scripture, and from the church fathers badly cited, corrupted, and altered from their true sense, and buffooneries without number which are unworthy of being written or read by Christians and by theologians."[84]

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capitales contenues en la Somme Theologique du Pere Francois Garasse de la Compagnie de Jesus (Paris 1626).

79. Cf. Jean Orcibal: *Les Origines du Jansénisme,* Tome II (Paris and Louvain 1947), chap. V.

80. Saint-Cyran: *Somme des fautes,* Tome I, Dedication, 1st, 2nd, and 42 pages.

81. *Ibid.,* Tome II, p. 241. 82. *Ibid.,* Tome II, pp. 321–324.

83. *Ibid.,* Tome II, pp. 321–469. Cf. Orcibal, *Origines du Jansénisme,* II, pp. 275–277. Gouhier, in his "*Crise de la Théologie*", pp. 29–31 and 51, examines the anti-rationalism involved in Saint-Cyran's and Jansen's theology.

84. Anon: *Censure de la Sacree Faculté de Theologie de Paris, contre un livre intitulé*

The attempt to end the alliance by claiming that the skeptics were secret atheists, whose aim was to destroy all religion, met with little success in the early part of the seventeenth century. The beleaguered Calvinists who sounded warnings about the consequences of using François Veron's machine of war were also ignored. The aggressive, premature anti-skeptics, like Garasse and Descartes, found themselves denounced and persecuted by the most orthodox leaders of the society, while the "Christian skeptics" were thriving as the favorites of Louis XIV and were dominating the intellectual scene. Garasse was condemned by the Sorbonne and silenced by the Jesuit order. Descartes, offering a positive theory to demonstrate the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, to replace the skepticism and fideism them current, found himself attacked by a leading Jesuit, Father Bourdin, and assailed by the Jesuit order until they achieved the condemnation of his works late in the century. Among the leaders in the struggle against Cartesianism were Father Gabriel Daniel, a Jesuit who preferred the skepticism of Gassendi to the dogmatic metaphysics of Descartes, and Pierre-Daniel Huet, the Bishop of Avranches, and La Mothe Le Vayer's successor as the teacher of the Dauphin, who advocated a complete Christian Pyrrhonism in preference to what he considered the heretical dogmatism of Descartes, heretical for trying to provide a rational basis for religion.[85]

The "Christian skeptics" were esteemed by most, though becoming more and more suspect. The admirers and supporters of the Montaigne tradition, La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Guy Patin, Petrus Gassendi, and Samuel Sorbière, lived out their lives in glory as the favorites of Richelieu and Mazarin, as the advisers of the leaders of church and state, and as the recipients of best political and intellectual plums available. In spite of the suspicions about them, they were able to maintain their positions and to hand their tradition over to Pierre-Daniel Huet.

The alliance died late in the seventeenth century, with the skeptics now classed as enemies of the church rather than friends. It is hard to date its termination,

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La Somme Theologique des veritez capitales de la Religion Chrestienne, par R. P. François Garassus, &c. (Paris 1626), pp. 12–13. On the background of this condemnation, see Orcibal: *Origines du Jansénisme*, II, pp. 263–267.

85. Cf. René Descartes: *The Seventh Set of Objections with the Author's Annotations thereon, otherwise a Dissertation concerning First Philosophy*, and *Letter to Father Dinet*, in *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Haldane-Ross ed. (New York 1955), Vol. II, pp. 259–376; Gaston Sortais: "Le Cartésianisme chez les Jésuites français au XVII[e] et au XVIII[e] siècle", *Archives de Philosophie* VI, Cahier III (1929); Pierre Daniel Huet: *Censura Philosophiae Cartesianae* (Paris 1689); Huet: *Traité philosophique de la foiblesse de l'esprit humain* (London 1741); and Gabriel Daniel: *Voyage du monde de Descartes* (Paris 1690).

and the about-face in evaluation of the merits and aims of the Christian skeptics. But the fate of Father Richard Simon's *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* of 1678, the crowning achievement of the "new machine of war," is probably indicative of what was happening. This scholarly work purported to demolish the Calvinist appeal to Scripture by showing that (a) no original manuscript of the Bible exists, and (b) nobody knows the original meaning of ancient Hebrew. Therefore Father Simon claimed no one could safely base one's faith on Scripture.

The destructive potentialities of Simon's work were immediately realized, the implications that it had for any and all historical documents, be they scriptural, apostolic, papal, or anything else. The work, dedicated to Louis XIV, was suppressed before publication. (A copy of this edition survives in the library of the last important leader of the alliance, the last direct-line disciple of Montaigne, Bishop Pierre Daniel Huet.)[86]

The alliance lasted approximately from the end of the Council of Trent until the period of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, until France was again "toute Catholique." But France "toute Catholique" was on the verge of showing one of the effects of a century of skeptical basis for its faith, in the Enlightenment, in the application of the tradition to Christianity itself by Voltaire, Diderot, and others.

The alliance contained an intellectual problem which was bound to be the source of its destruction. The total skepticism with regard to any foundation for any human knowledge eliminated the possibility of any rational basis for the religion as well. The total skepticism implied no conclusion whatsoever about what one was to believe. If the "Christian skeptic," or the operator of the machine of war, had any beliefs, that was accidental as far as his negative argument was concerned. If one accepted the negative argument, the doubt about the possibility of man, by rational means, ever finding the truth, then on what basis could the members of the alliance advocate their faith? Any beliefs, or no beliefs, were compatible with their argument, since their argument implied nothing whatsoever.[87] One could accept the negative reasonings of Charron and Veron if one were a complete agnostic, or if one were a Catholic, a Protestant, or anything else. Thus, in spite of the recent attempts to portray Montaigne as a religious writer, in theory he may have been a believer or a non-believer. Concentration on the anti-rationalism of the Montaignians can easily lead to agnosticism if no

86. Cf. Richard Simon: *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (Paris 1678). This copy is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Rés. A. 3498.

87. Cf. R. H. Popkin: "Theological and Religious Scepticism", *Christian Scholar,* XXXIX (1956), esp. pp. 155–158.

revelation occurs. The "fideism" of Voltaire[88] is as likely a result as the orthodoxy of the Cardinal du Perron. The alliance probably provided good camouflage for the indifferent, the unbelievers, and the anti-fanatics, while providing, in terms of its tactical and strategic success, excellent ammunition for the believers. My own guess is that Montaigne was indifferent, La Mothe Le Vayer and Naudé may not have been believers at all, while Bishop Camus, Father Charron,[89] and Mlle. de Gournay were probably believers. They could all join together with the French counter-reformers against the dogmatic Calvinists without having to be for anything.

The theoretical base for this side of the French Counter-Reformation contains a two-edged sword that can be used against any argument for Catholicism as well as any argument for Calvinism. If those who employ the sword do not happen to be believers, the results can be another Age of Enlightenment instead of another Age of Faith. The present-day appeal to Christian skepticism in the Neo-Orthodox movement may soon spawn a new unwanted heir, a new Voltairean epoch.

Zusammenfassung

In Frankreich begegnen uns zur Zeit der Gegenreformation viele führende Katholiken, die Freunde und Verehrer Montaignes und seiner Schüler waren; es scheint dies eine lose Verbindung zwischen den pyrrhonischen Skeptikern jener Zeit und orthodoxen Theologen zur Bekämpfung des Calvinismus gewesen zu sein. Eine Prüfung der von den Anhängern der Gegenreformation angewandten intellektuellen Methoden legt es nahe, diese Verbindung zu deuten. Von Gentian Hervet und Juan Maldonat bis zu François Veron kommt ein ungemein skeptisches und destruktives Beweisverfahren zur Ausbildung und Verwendung, um jede denkbare Begründung auszuschließen, die den Calvinismus als wahres Christentum gelten läßt. Bediente man sich dieser Methode, die als „machine de guerre" bezeichnet wurde, mit letzter Folgerichtigkeit, so mußte sie schließlich nicht nur die geistige Grundlage des Calvinismus, sondern ebenso die jeder anderen religiösen Anschauung zerstören. Die französischen Vertreter der Gegenreformation scheinen stillschweigend oder ausdrücklich den Fideismus oder den katholischen Pyrrhonismus Montaignes und seiner Schüler zur „défense" ihrer eigenen Stellung übernommen zu haben. Daraus ergibt sich, daß die Skeptiker jener Zeit sowohl die Waffen zum Kampf gegen den Calvinismus geliefert, als auch den Katholizismus zu einer nichtrationalen, der „machine de guerre" gewachsenen Grundlage verholfen haben. Die Rolle der Skeptiker als Theoretiker einer in Frankreich populären Richtung der Gegenrefor-

88. Cf. the ironic fideism in Voltaire's article on "Foi", in the *Dictionnaire Philosophique,* ed by Julien Benda and Raymond Naves, (Classiques Garnier), (Paris 1954), pp. 202–203.

89. Professor Orcibal and the R. P. Julien-Eymard d'Angers have expressed serious doubts to me regarding this interpretation of Charron.

mation kann die Verbindung zwischen den orthodoxen Katholiken und den Anhängern Montaignes verständlich machen. Und diese Verbindung scheint trotz der Versuche, die Skeptiker als Gefahr für die Religion hinzustellen, bis zum Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts fortbestanden zu haben. Die Skeptiker gefielen sich dabei als Schützlinge verschiedener Kirchenführer.

Miszelle

Zwei Druckseiten mit Georg Rörers Korrekturen zur zweiten Auflage von Luthers Galaterbriefkommentar von 1538

von Hans Volz

Neben den 26 einseitig bedruckten Korrektur-Doppelblättern, die zu der von Georg Rörer auf Grund seiner Kollegnachschrift besorgten und 1535 in Oktavformat von Hans Lufft in Wittenberg gedruckten Erstausgabe von Luthers großem lateinischem Galaterbriefkommentar von 1531 („In epistolam S. Pauli ad Galatas commentarius, ex praelectione D. Martini Lutheri collectus" [WA Bd. 40^I^, S. 13: A; vorhanden auch: Göttingen, Staats- und Univ.-Bibl., 8° Autogr. Luth. 1410]) gehören und im Besitz der Erlanger Universitätsbibliothek (Cimelienschrank IV) sind (vgl. WA Bd. 40^I^, S. 5 und 30–32 [Abdruck der Korrekturen] und 691), sind auch noch zwei ebenfalls bloß einseitig bedruckte einzelne Korrekturseiten erhalten, die der (gleichfalls von Rörer veranstalteten) verbesserten zweiten Auflage („Iam denuo diligenter recognitus, castigatus etc.") dieses Werkes von 1538 (Wittenberg, Lufft 1538 4° [WA Bd. 40^I^, S. 14: C]) entstammen und sich auf der Handschriftenabteilung der Niedersächsischen Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen befinden. Die Herkunft der Erlanger und Göttinger Blätter ist die gleiche: sie sind aus irgendwelchen (im einzelnen nicht bekannten) Bucheinbänden herausgelöst. Während sich die Erlanger Blätter auf Gal. cap. 3 (v. 4–6 und 10–13) und cap. 5 (v. 3–5 und 13 f.) beziehen, enthalten die beiden Göttinger Seiten Ausführungen zu Gal. 3, 19. Die erste Seite (= Bl. CLXXXV^b^ [Bl. AA^b^] des Lufft-Druckes von 1538 = WA Bd. 40^I^, S. 479, 26–481, 15) ist gut erhalten, die zweite (= Bl. CLXXXVIII^a^ [Bl. AA 4^a^] des Lufft-Druckes von 1538 = WA Bd. 40^I^, S. 486, 10–487, 16) ist dagegen am linken (inneren) Rand und im unteren Viertel des Textes bei der Herauslösung aus dem Einband stark beschädigt.

Die besondere Bedeutung dieser beiden Göttinger Seiten liegt – ebenso wie die der Erlanger – darin, daß sie eigenhändige Korrekturen des Bearbeiters Rörer tragen, die sich aber nicht nur auf die Berichtigung von reinen Druckfehlern beschränken, sondern darüber hinaus auch in textgeschichtlicher Hinsicht von Interesse sind und einen Einblick in Rörers Arbeitsweise gewähren. Für die Neuauflage von 1538 hatte Rörer den Kommentartext von 1535 nicht nur stilistisch überarbeitet und verbessert, sondern auch durch vielfache größere oder kleinere Zusätze ergänzt, die er – wie die Korrekturbogen lehren – zum Teil bereits in sein (nicht erhaltenes) Druckmanuskript für die Ausgabe von 1538 eingesetzt hatte, zum Teil aber auch erst bei der Korrektur hinzufügte. So enthält z. B. die zweite Korrekturseite statt des ursprünglichen Textes von 1535: „lex ... accusat,